

In Another Time

by Queen of the Beasts

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Summary: After being in sleep for who knows how long, John Reid has finally woken up and struggles to adapt to the Avengers, the 21st century and its surroundings. Not to mention the coming threat that even he is not prepared for. A bit AU, set after CA:TSW

## In Another Time

\*\*So, I decided to have my heart set on a semi-horror fic. Not the gross kind like you see where someone gets their heads torn off. \*shudders at \*\*\_The Haunting of Hill House\_\*\*\* But a light-hearted one at hand with supernatural themes in it. I haven't had written a Lone Ranger story at hand, so I need to know if he's going OOC or not. Thank you.\*\*

### 1. Showdown in Texas

New York City was probably one of the noisiest places you've ever been to. It seemed that the city never sleeps. Lights flashed everywhere, casinos and businesses were buzzing, and people were partying, hanging out, or doing their jobs. It was one of the few major cities in the world that attracts so many people who wanted to start a new life, especially young adults and teenagers. But when there were a lot of businesses, people, and activity all in a huge area, there was a drawback. Crime was very popular in the city, even with all the police and high-tech security around.

It was evening by the time they decided to head back to Stark Towers, even though it was now known as the Avengers Tower. Tony ranted continually, and Bruce was paying more attention to him than Pepper would have. Rhodey sat in the front, irritating him more by smiling and nodding his head. Surprisingly, Happy was the first to notice that a street was blocked off by a series of signs and officers.

The building before them was not tall enough to be a skyscraper but

certainly more modern than the tower itself. There was about twenty-two floors made entirely out of brick and marble. There was now a gaping hole around one of the upper floors where several windows had been shattered and were now lying on the street in a pile of shards.

"What's going on?" Bruce wondered when Happy stopped.

"Let's go check it out," Tony suggested.

"That's none of our business," Pepper said.

"Perhaps it is." Rhodey's dark eyes narrowed. "Look."

He pointed at one of the men standing closest to them across the divide. The familiar insignia on the left breast of his uniform stood out as he was a member of S.H.I.E.L.D. They exchanged a look and Happy parked so they would get out and approach the man. The person noticed them and whispered to the man next to him that was wearing a black coat. He turned around to reveal none other than the former director Nick Fury, although he was wearing shades instead of his iconic eyepatch.

Tony slipped under the police tape as they regarded each other. "What's going on here?" he asked.

"You tell me." Nick gestured to a small group. "Those workers and everyone else claimed that some dragon broke into the tech industry, stole some highly advanced equipment, and then disappeared."

Rhodey gaped at him. "Dragon?"

"It was the best estimation we got," Nick explained.

"That sounds ominous," Happy commented.

Pepper frowned at the building. "What made them think that?"

"It jumped from the rooftop and flew southwest from here. Unfortunately people didn't get a good look at it, but it wasn't hard to miss."

"So, what? We're dealing with maybe a mutant that looks like a dragon?" Bruce guessed.

"All I know so far is that it was something with skin that can't be penetrated. And from an angle it didn't look like any dragon I've seen. To me, it looked like that freak from hell in that new Godzilla movie."

"I thought you said you didn't get a good look at it," Happy said.

"Not this time," Nick replied, "but I bet it's the same one that broke into Prison 42 last night, though I have no idea what for. Maybe you want to help us find it before it heads for something else that's important?"

Bruce frowned. "Prison 42?"

"Our top secret prison for the most dangerous criminals on Earth," Nick explained.

Another officer came up and whispered something in Nick's ear. The man excused himself to go investigate.

"Do you think this is Loki's work?" Bruce asked

"Oh, come on, Loki doesn't know what he was doing with his arrogance," Tony retorted. "He probably won't even know that until we catch up."

"What if you could?" Happy asked.

Tony glanced at him. "What do you mean?"

"Well, if Loki is behind this, there must be a connection between the two," Pepper pointed out.

"The only way he would do that is if he had his staff, which he does not have and we do," Tony deadpanned.

Bruce's cellphone vibrated in his pant pocket. He fished it out and found a text. His eyes darkened again. "Maybe so," he said. "But Clint and Natasha both spotted it in the Sabine."

Tony stared at him. "And that's where?"

"Texas," Happy answered.

"You need to go," Pepper told him.

"I promised..."

Pepper stopped him with a peck on the cheek. "You have homework."

Tony sighed. "I'll see you guys later."

"See us later?" Rhodey retorted. "I'm going with you. I'm not letting you get yourself killed alone like the last time, remember."

"Guys?"

Everyone looked at Bruce.

"Count me in," Bruce said.

"Are you sure?" Rhodey asked.

"Not exactly. But if we're dealing with something that might, might not breathe fire, then you're going to need all the help you can get."

\* \* \*

><p>In the forest of the Sabine in Texas, two of Fury's former assassins were climbing over the rocky edges on a climb to get closer to their detination. Someone had recently reported the sighting of

the mysterious beast and they had decided to go check it out. Their hands were becoming cracked from the chalky surface of the rocks.<p>

"So, we're suppose to be looking for a dragon?" Clint asked.

"That's what I heard," Natasha said.

"Guess we're gonna need to call Saint George if Fury's gone mythical for a change," Clint joked.

"It's not funny," Natasha hissed.

Clint laughed quietly as they continued on.

\_Thump.\_

Natasha gasped, causing herself to crouch even lower.

\_Thump.\_

Clint crouched lower and continued to crawl. "I'm calling backup," he whispered.

\_Thump.\_

Natasha swallowed, her hands gripping tightly to the rocks.

\_Thump.\_

The footsteps stopped for a moment. Both assassins froze when they looked up.

The creature's body was slick, black and red. The shape of its head was loosely familiar to a birds, and it had triangular jaws. It also had two pairs of forelimbs that were modified into its wings. It had red eyes and two hind legs with a long tail. Small spikes traveled down its back.

"Uh-oh," Clint gulped.

The creature disappeared back into its cave.

Natasha sighed in relief, then continued until they reached the ledge. Natasha pulled herself and then helped up Clint. He stood up and they glanced down at the cave. Clint gave out a long whistle.

"Well, that is one long tunnel," he commented.

Natasha was about to put her inputs on it, but stopped when the sound of rockets forced their gaze upwards as the Iron Man and War Machine were landing behind them. They were caught off guard when a sudden force smashed nearby. The Hulk stood up and shook himself off.

"Hulk here," he said.

Clint and Natasha gaped at him before looking at Tony.

"It was either him included or none of us," Rhodey explained from somewhere inside the helmet.

"What brings you here?" Natasha questioned.

"Nick and the rest of S.H.I.E.L.D.â€”or what's left of themâ€”were in the city," Tony answered, folding his arms, "claiming this dragon was stealing highly advanced equipment and released someone from Prison 42."

"Ah! Why couldn't it steal from the Attica Correctional Facility?" Clint asked.

"Good question," Tony stated. "I was hoping maybe you two would know."

"Less talking, more smashing," Hulk said, slamming his right fist into the left palm of his hand.

"I'm in," Rhodey piped up after a while.

"If you want your dragon, it's down there," Natasha said, pointing down the dark.

"Ooo-kay, who want's to go down the creepy tunnel first?" Tony asked.

"I will," Hulk said as he started forward.

"Well, we have a winner," Rhodey joked before they followed the behemoth.

They tried to soundlessly creep down the tunnel, hoping no one would make any sound that could catch its attention. The entire place had a musty smell, and they could hear droplets of water hitting into small pools of water from the stalactites hanging up from the cavern ceiling. It was not long before they reached a large room and saw what laid in it.

The cavern was a vast room with more stalactites and stalagmites growing and scattered at the edges. There was still that same musty smell that spread through the air, mist swirling over the water. A trail led to the other side of the grotto, where there were some bizarre paintings of past life and wild animals. The same beast Clint and Natasha saw was on the wall as well. There was an eerie glow coming from the ceiling, giving off light for them to see.

"This is awesome," Tony said.

"So, what do we do now?" Rhodey asked.

"I say we smash it," Hulk suggested.

"Nice plan," Clint teased. "How long did it take for you to come up with that?"

"I can smash you too," Hulk snarled.

"Let's go boys," Natasha said as she started forward.

"Well, they do say ladies first," Clint said before they started down with her.

The path was narrow. Each step made small ripples in the pools. The small fish that swam in the water swam away. No matter how far they went, they always had the feeling someone was watching them.

"Hey, Tony? Doesn't this look familiar?" Rhodey asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. Doesn't it feel like you've seen this somewhere before?"

"Um, last time I checked, I never did."

"I know I saw this somewhere before. I just can't put my finger on it."

"Any word from the others?" Natasha asked.

"Yeah, Thor's on his way," Clint answered. "I still can't get a hold of Steve and this buddy of his."

Hulk suddenly stopped in his tracks. Both iron warriors nearly bumped into him.

"Um, are we gonna get a move on or what?" Tony asked.

"There's some kind of energy radiating from across," Hulk said.

"What?" Clint fished out a device from his pocket and turned it on. "Huh, what do you know. Hulk's right."

"Ooh, goody," Tony said as he rubbed his hands together. "This should be fun."

"That's what you said last time before Natasha locked us both up in a closet with that German shorthaired pointer," Rhodey reminded.

"He was friendly," Natasha said.

"He was horny!" Rhodey shot back.

Clint walked up ahead, ignoring the bickering between the trio. The Hulk was right behind him as he waved the device around, trying to pinpoint where the source could be. He kept going when a spot he searched at was clear, and would sometimes turn to the Hulk for help. He almost gave up with the detector gave off an analogical sound.

"Guys, we found something," Clint called out, catching their attention. All three of them ran over to the area. When they looked it over, there wasn't a sign of anything strange in the section.

"You guys wanna start searching?" Tony offered.

"What's that noise?" Rhodey looked behind him. They turned to the direction to where the noise came from. A thunderclap resounded off of the walls. In a nick of time, Thor came flying in and landing in front of them.

"Well, look who finally showed up," Clint said.

"What, did you stop for drive-through?" Tony questioned.

"There was some research going on in London when I received the call," Thor explained. "I came as quick as I could."

"Wait. Did you say London?" Rhodey asked. "How the heck did you get all the way here?"

"We have a mission here," Natasha reminded them.

"But we're at a dead end," Rhodey said.

"Why am I not surprise?" Tony grumbled.

"I have enough!" Hulk stated. He drew a fist back to punch the wall, but Clint grabbed it in time.

"No, wait," the archer hissed. "We don't want to catch attention from that thing."

"What thing?" Thor asked.

"Um, Fury mentioned something about a dragon," Rhodey explained.

"Really?" Clint snorted. "Didn't look like one when we saw it."

"Ooh, what did it look like?" Tony asked. When they glared at him he quickly asked, "I mean, so what do we do now? And I don't think smashing is a good idea." The statement made Hulk pout.

"If there's something here hiding in plain sight, it must be precious to it," Natasha stated, staring up at the painting. "I suggest two of us stay here and investigate while we draw the creature outside."

"Only if we knew what it looked like."

Natasha groaned and pointed at the creature's signature on the wall. "That thing."

"Can we blow it up?"

"You can blow but I can't smash?" Hulk argued.

"Uh, last time I checked blowing up stuff made the job easier and a lot more fun," Tony countered.

"We cannot blow it up," Thor chided. "That animal could be sacred to the Natives that either does or once resided in these parts. For all we know, killing it could anger them if so."

"Then we have to get it out here and distract it while we can," Natasha said.

"How are we going to do that?" Rhodey asked.

Hulk suddenly roared, echoes of the sound bouncing off of the walls. His teammates ducked down and covered their heads and waited for the thing to appear. When nothing happened, they glared at him.

"Smooth," Tony chided. "Real smooth. What are you trying to do, get us all killed?"

"I thought we were drawing it out," Thor recounted. His tone sounded off with the words he said as he fixed a glare at the empty grotto.

"Ooo-kay," Tony said. "Nothing in there and no monster coming. Still can't explain why we're still here then."

"I'll tell you why," Thor spoke as he stepped into the small area. "Tis some kind of magic emanating from this place. The only problem is that this kind is nothing I am familiar with."

"Well, this pretty much sums up the basics again," Natasha uttered. "We just need to know exactly what it is that's causing it."

"I wish Loki were still alive and here."

The entire team gawked at him.

"He's a practitioner of magic," Thor quickly explained. "He'd be able to find out what it is within a second."

"I'll take care of it," Tony said.

"Don't touch a thing or make a noise," Natasha warned.

"I know," Tony said. "JARVIS, run a scan for me."

"Mortal technology," Thor scoffed. "You would do better to trust your eyes and ears."

Clint and Rhodey snickered.

"Bet Cupid and RoboCop couldn't do it to save their lives," Hulk said.

"Oh, you wanna go, buddy? Do ya?" Clint challenged, glaring at the behemoth.

"\_Sir, there is a large energy signature from your right,"\_ JARVIS spoke.

"Great," Tony said. "Although it's so weird that I didn't see nor hear it."

Thor scowled.

"Okay, you can smash it now," Natasha said.



"Finally!" Hulk's fist slammed into the side, forcing Tony to yelp and duck.

"Give me a warning next time," Tony growled.

A primal, warbled screech echoed suddenly throughout the cave. Everyone froze.

"Oh, sure," Tony exclaimed. "It won't respond to Hulk roaring but it'll respond to that?"

The sound of wings flapping could be heard coming from down one of the tunnels. The team prepared themselves. The sight of an enormous creature was their first glimpse of it. The creature landed in front of them, towering over them completely. It hissed at them, looking disdain.

"Hey," Tony greeted stupidly.

"\_Scree-EEK!\_"

The creature roared, forcing them to cover their ears. The creature reared back and brought its forelimbs down, pinning Natasha and Clint to the ground, drool dripping from its mouth. It was ready to devour them when something slammed into it, forcing it to go flying in the air and crash nearby. A hammer came flying and into the hand of Thor.

"Thanks," Clint coughed.

"No problem," Thor said.

"It's getting up," Rhodey informed.

"Alright," Tony snarled. "Let's just get this over with."

The creature turned to them and let out the same warbled scream as before, but it was distant thanks to Thor.

"Hulk get," the Hulk said as he charged forward.

"Hulk, wait!" Natasha called out, but her words fell on deaf ears as the Hulk slammed into it again, grabbing onto the shoulder. The creature just used its winged forelimb to swat the Hulk off of it. The Hulk crashed into the grotto, the rock inside falling on top of him. As it turned around, it noticed the others running down where they came in from. With one leap, the animal flew into the air and began to chase them.

"How does something get that big?" Natasha asked.

"You wanna turn around and ask it?" Clint replied as they made it outside.

The beast felt a bolt of lightning singed its brow, causing it to scream once more. Clint shot several arrows into the air and pressed a button on his bow. The arrows exploded and completely confused their prey. Tony unleashed several rockets from his shoulder pads. Natasha lit its skin on fire with some of her grenades. The onslaught

wasn't doing much harm to it. It was just making it angry.

Very angry.

With a guttural shriek, it lifted its forelimbs high into the air and slammed them into the ground. A shockwave shot from its claws and flew outwards. The HUDs in Rhodey and Tony's helmets went off.

"Uh-oh."

Screams of terror came out as they fell towards the Earth at an incredibly fast rate. With a loud smack, they made touchdown with the ground.

Rhodey and Tony ended up lying beside one another when Clint bent over to look at them. "What happened?"

"I think we just fell out of the sky," Tony said. They staggered to their feet and turned around, seeing the monster in combat with Thor. Clint clicked his bow several times but got none of his tech to reactivate.

"Tony, my weapons aren't working," he said. Tony raised his arm, but got the same result.

"Mine either," he said. "JARVIS, run a diagnostic." The usual snarky voice was nowhere to be heard. "JARVIS. JARVIS?"

Steve and Sam had just appeared before they could realize what they were up against.

"Whoa," Sam mused.

"That thing has got to be bigger than the Leviathans," Steve agreed. "But they'll need our help."

"Got it!"

Sam activated the wings in his pack and zoomed in on it. Steve threw his shield with all of his might and it slammed into the beast's jaw. With a battle cry, Sam charged. He jumped on its head and took a swipe at it. It cried out in pain and frustration, shaking its head wildly. Sam went in for another blow. Natasha removed a grenade from belt and threw it at the creature's back. Unfortunately, it turned its body around, and the grenade detonated at the tip of one of Sam's wings. He screamed as he fell right onto Tony, causing Clint to laugh.

"Come on!" Tony shouted.

"\_Scree-EEK.\_"

The chilling call echoed across the forest floor. They all turned to see the beast flying over the forest, its black silhouette notable against the clouds. It shrank farther and farther until it disappeared completely. The team was exhausted. They had put their all into that showdown, but had nothing to prove their worth.

Clint glared at Steve.

"What?"

"Why weren't you answering?" Clint demanded.

"We were looking for someone," Sam defended. "We can't be making personal calls when even HYDRA is trying to kill us all."

Heavy footsteps had them turning around to look at what it was. Hulk approached them, cradling something in his arms. Or someone.

"What is it?" Steve asked as they approached him. He noticed a confused frown on the giant's face. They looked down at the person and for a minute, it barely made any sense. Shock suddenly ran through them.

"Is thatâ€|?" Rhodey started.

"And everyone here thought I am out of time," Thor spoke.

"Shut up," Tony squeaked.

End  
file.